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“HOW THE FRANCO-GERMAN CONFLICT MIGHT HAVE BEEN AVOIDED”¹

The following documents refer to the exchange of views between Germany and England immediately before the war broke out. It will be perceived from these documents that Germany was prepared to spare France in case England should remain neutral and would guarantee the neutrality of France.

Telegram of His Royal Highness Prince Henry of Prussia to H. M. the King of England of July 30th, 1914

Am here since yesterday, have informed William of what you kindly told me at Buckingham Palace last Sunday who gratefully received your message.

William, much preoccupied, is trying his utmost to fulfill Nicky's appeal to him to work for maintenance of peace and is in constant telegraphic communication with Nicky who to-day confirms news that military measures have been ordered by him equal to mobilization, measures which have been taken already five days ago.

We are furthermore informed that France is making military preparations whereas we have taken no measures but may be forced to do so any moment should our neighbors continue which then would mean a European war.

If you really and earnestly wish to prevent this terrible disaster, may I suggest you using your influence on France and also Russia to keep neutral which seems to me would be most useful.

This I consider a very good, perhaps the only chance, to maintain the peace of Europe.

I may add that now more than ever Germany and England should lend each other mutual help to prevent a terrible catastrophe which otherwise seems unavoidable.

Believe me that William is most sincere in his endeavors to maintain peace, but that the military preparations of his two neighbors may at last force him to follow their example for the safety of his own country, which otherwise would remain defenseless.

I have informed William of my telegram to you and hope you will

¹ Official document published in English by the German Government. Druck: Liebheit & Thiesen, Berlin.

receive my informations in the same spirit of friendship which suggested them. (Signed) HENRY.

Telegram of H. M. the King of England to Prince Henry of Prussia of July 30th, 1914

Thanks for your telegram, so pleased to hear of William's effort to concert with Nicky to maintain peace. Indeed I am earnestly desirous that such an irreparable disaster as a European war should be averted. My government is doing its utmost suggesting to Russia and France to suspend further military preparations if Austria will consent to be satisfied with occupation of Belgrade and neighboring Servian territory as a hostage for satisfactory settlement of her demands other countries meanwhile suspending their war preparation. Trust William will use his great influence to induce Austria to accept this proposal thus proving that Germany and England are working together to prevent what would be an international catastrophe. Pray assure William I am doing and shall continue to do all that lies in my power to preserve peace of Europe. (Signed) GEORGE.

Telegram of His Majesty the Emperor to H. M. the King of England of July 31st, 1914

Many thanks for your kind telegram. Your proposals coincide with my ideas and with the statements I got this night from Vienna which I have had forwarded to London. I just received news from Chancellor that official notification has just reached him that this night Nicky has ordered the mobilization of his whole army and fleet. He has not even awaited the results of the mediation I am working at and left me without any news. I am off for Berlin to take measures for insuring safety of my eastern frontiers where strong Russian troops are already posted. (Signed) WILLY.

Telegram of the King of England to His Majesty the Emperor of August 1st, 1914

Many thanks for your telegram last night. I sent an urgent telegram to Nicky expressing my readiness to do everything in my power to assist in reopening conversations between Powers concerned. (Signed) GEORGIE.

Telegram of the German Ambassador in London to the Chancellor of August 1st, 1914

Sir E. Grey just asked me by telephone whether I believed to be in a position to declare that we would not attack France in a war between Germany and Russia in case France should remain neutral. I declared I believed to be able to give such an undertaking.

(Signed) LICHNOWSKY.

Telegram of His Majesty the Emperor to H. M. the King of England of August 1st, 1914

I just received the communication from your government offering French neutrality under guarantee of Great Britain. Added to this offer was the enquiry whether under these conditions Germany would refrain from attacking France. On technical grounds my mobilization which had already been proclaimed this afternoon must proceed against two fronts east and west as prepared; this cannot be countermanded because I am sorry your telegram came so late. But if France offers me neutrality which must be guaranteed by the British fleet and army I shall of course refrain from attacking France and employ my troops elsewhere. I hope that France will not become nervous. The troops on my frontier are in the act of being stopped by telegraph and telephone from crossing into France.

Telegram of the Chancellor to the German Ambassador in London of August 1st, 1914

Germany is ready to accept British proposal in case England guarantees with all her forces absolute neutrality of France in Russo-German conflict. German mobilization has been ordered to-day on account of Russian challenge before English proposal was known here. It is therefore now impossible to make any change in strategical distribution of troops ordered to the French frontier. But we guarantee that our troops will not cross the French frontier before 7 P. M. on Monday the 3rd inst. in case England will pledge herself meanwhile.

(Signed) BETHMANN-HOLLWEG.

*Telegram of H. M. the King of England to His Majesty the Emperor of
August 1st, 1914*

In answer to your telegram just received, I think there must be some misunderstanding as to a suggestion that passed in friendly conversation between Prince Lichnowsky and Sir Edward Grey this afternoon when they were discussing how actual fighting between German and French armies might be avoided while there is still a chance of some agreement between Austria and Russia. Sir Edward Grey will arrange to see Prince Lichnowsky early to-morrow morning to ascertain whether there is a misunderstanding on his part. (Signed) GEORGE.

*Telegram of the German Ambassador in London to the Chancellor of
August 2nd, 1914*

Sir E. Grey's suggestions were prompted by a desire to make it possible for England to keep permanent neutrality, but as they were not based on a previous understanding with France and made without knowledge of our mobilization, they have been abandoned as absolutely hopeless. (Signed) LICHNOWSKY.

The essence of Germany's declarations is contained in Emperor William's telegram to the King of England of August 1st, 1914. Even if there existed a misunderstanding as to an English proposal, the Kaiser's offer furnished England the opportunity to prove her pacific disposition and to prevent the Franco-German war.

STATEMENT OF SIR EDWARD GREY ON THE LICHNOWSKY DESPATCHES ¹

Lord ROBERT CECIL asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether his attention has been called to the publication by the German Government of certain proposals which are alleged to have been made to secure French and English neutrality during the war; and whether the publication was complete and accurate.

Sir E. GREY: I have seen an incomplete publication. The circumstances were as follows: It was reported to me one day that the German Ambassador had suggested

¹ Hansard, Vol. 66, No. 123.